## AMENDED IN ASSEMBLY MARCH 30, 2005

CALIFORNIA LEGISLATURE—2005-06 REGULAR SESSION

## **ASSEMBLY BILL**

No. 519

## **Introduced by Assembly Member Leno**

February 16, 2005

An act to amend—Section Sections 213.5 and 366.26 of the Welfare and Institutions Code, relating to children.

## LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

AB 519, as amended, Leno. Parental rights.

Existing law provides that children may become dependent children of the juvenile court on the basis of abuse or neglect. Existing law specifies that any order of the court permanently terminating parental rights is conclusive and binding on the child, subject to specified notice provisions, and gives the juvenile court no power to set aside, change, or modify that order, except that the order may be appealed.

This bill would create an exception to this provision to permit a dependent child who has not been adopted after the passage of at least 3 years from termination of parental rights or is no longer adoptable, as specified, to petition the juvenile court for reinstatement of parental rights, pursuant to specified procedures.

Existing law permits the juvenile court to issue specified ex parte orders to protect a dependent child and also permits the court to issue specified ex parte orders to protect the parent, legal guardian, or current caretaker of a dependent child.

This bill would make technical changes to that latter provision.

Vote: majority. Appropriation: no. Fiscal committee: no. State-mandated local program: no.

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The people of the State of California do enact as follows:

SECTION 1. Section 213.5 of the Welfare and Institutions Code is amended to read:

213.5. (a) After a petition has been filed pursuant to Section 311 to declare a child a dependent child of the juvenile court, and until the time that the petition is dismissed or dependency is terminated, upon application in the manner provided by Section 527 of the Code of Civil Procedure, the juvenile court may issue ex parte orders (1) enjoining any person from molesting, attacking, striking, sexually assaulting, stalking, or battering the child or any other child in the household; (2) excluding any person from the dwelling of the person who has care, custody, and control of the child; and (3) enjoining any person from behavior, including contacting, threatening, or disturbing the peace of the child, that the court determines is necessary to effectuate orders under paragraph (1) or (2). A court-issuing may also issue an ex parte order pursuant to this subdivision may simultaneously issue an ex parte order enjoining any person from contacting, threatening, molesting, attacking, striking, sexually assaulting, stalking, battering, or disturbing the peace of any parent, legal guardian, or current caretaker of the child, regardless of whether the child resides with that parent, legal guardian, or current caretaker, upon application in the manner provided by Section 527 of the Code of Civil Procedure.

- (b) After a petition has been filed pursuant to Section 601 or 602 to declare a child a ward of the juvenile court, and until the time that the petition is dismissed or wardship is terminated, upon application in the manner provided by Section 527 of the Code of Civil Procedure, the juvenile court may issue ex parte orders (1) enjoining any person from molesting, attacking, threatening, sexually assaulting, stalking, or battering the child or any other child in the household; (2) excluding any person from the dwelling of the person who has care, custody, and control of the child; or (3) enjoining the child from contacting, threatening, stalking, or disturbing the peace of any person the court finds to be at risk from the conduct of the child, or with whom association would be detrimental to the child.
- (c) In the case in which a temporary restraining order is granted without notice, the matter shall be made returnable on an

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order requiring cause to be shown why the order should not be 2 granted, on the earliest day that the business of the court will 3 permit, but not later than 15 days or, if good cause appears to the 4 court, 20 days from the date the temporary restraining order is 5 granted. The court may, on the motion of the person seeking the restraining order, or on its own motion, shorten the time for 7 service on the person to be restrained of the order to show cause. 8 The court may, upon its own motion or the filing of an affidavit by the person seeking the restraining order, find that the person 10 to be restrained could not be served within the time required by 11 law and to reissue an order previously issued and dissolved by 12 the court for failure to serve the person to be restrained. The 13 reissued order shall state on its face the date of expiration of the 14 order. Any hearing pursuant to this section may be held 15 simultaneously with any regularly scheduled hearings held in proceedings to declare a child a dependent child or ward of the 16 17 juvenile court pursuant to Section 300, 601, or 602, or 18 subsequent hearings regarding the dependent child or ward. 19

(d) The juvenile court may issue, upon notice and a hearing, any of the orders set forth in subdivisions (a), (b), and (c). Any restraining order granted pursuant to this subdivision shall remain in effect, in the discretion of the court, not to exceed three years, unless otherwise terminated by the court, extended by mutual consent of all parties to the restraining order, or extended by further order of the court on the motion of any party to the restraining order.

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- (e) (1) The juvenile court may issue an order made pursuant to subdivision (a), (c), or (d) excluding a person from a residence or dwelling. This order may be issued for the time and on the conditions that the court determines, regardless of which party holds legal or equitable title or is the lessee of the residence or dwelling.
- (2) The court may issue an order under paragraph (1) only on a showing of all of the following:
- (A) Facts sufficient for the court to ascertain that the party who will stay in the dwelling has a right under color of law to possession of the premises.
- (B) That the party to be excluded has assaulted or threatens to assault the other party or any other person under the care,

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custody, and control of the other party, or any minor child of the parties or of the other party.

- (C) That physical or emotional harm would otherwise result to the other party, to any person under the care, custody, and control of the other party, or to any minor child of the parties or of the other party.
- (f) Any order issued pursuant to subdivision (a), (b), (c), or (d) shall state on its face the date of expiration of the order.
- (g) The juvenile court shall order any designated person or attorney to mail a copy of any order, or extension, modification, or termination thereof, granted pursuant to subdivision (a), (b), (c), or (d), by the close of the business day on which the order, extension, modification, or termination was granted, and any subsequent proof of service thereof, to each local law enforcement agency designated by the person seeking the restraining order or his or her attorney having jurisdiction over the residence of the person who has care, custody, and control of the child and other locations where the court determines that acts of domestic violence or abuse against the child or children are likely to occur. Each appropriate law enforcement agency shall make available through an existing system for verification, information as to the existence, terms, and current status of any order issued pursuant to subdivision (a), (b), (c), or (d) to any law enforcement officer responding to the scene of reported domestic violence or abuse.
- (h) Any willful and knowing violation of any order granted pursuant to subdivision (a), (b), (c), or (d) shall be a misdemeanor punishable under Section 273.65 of the Penal Code.
- (i) A juvenile court restraining order related to domestic violence issued by a court pursuant to this section shall be issued on forms adopted by the Judicial Council of California and that have been approved by the Department of Justice pursuant to subdivision (i) of Section 6380 of the Family Code. However, the fact that an order issued by a court pursuant to this section was not issued on forms adopted by the Judicial Council and approved by the Department of Justice shall not, in and of itself, make the order unenforceable.
- (j) Information on any juvenile court restraining order related to domestic violence issued by a court pursuant to this section

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shall be transmitted to the Department of Justice in accordance with subdivision (b) of Section 6380 of the Family Code.

- (k) (1) Prior to a hearing on the issuance or denial of an order under this part, a search shall be conducted as described in subdivision (a) of Section 6306 of the Family Code.
- (2) Prior to deciding whether to issue an order under this part, the court shall consider the following information obtained pursuant to a search conducted under paragraph (1): any conviction for a violent felony specified in Section 667.5 of the Penal Code or a serious felony specified in Section 1192.7 of the Penal Code; any misdemeanor conviction involving domestic violence, weapons, or other violence; any outstanding warrant; parole or probation status; any prior restraining order; and any violation of a prior restraining order.
- (3) (A) If the results of the search conducted pursuant to paragraph (1) indicate that an outstanding warrant exists against the subject of the search, the court shall order the clerk of the court to immediately notify, by the most effective means available, appropriate law enforcement officials of any information obtained through the search that the court determines is appropriate. The law enforcement officials so notified shall take all actions necessary to execute any outstanding warrants or any other actions, as appropriate and as soon as practicable.
- (B) If the results of the search conducted pursuant to paragraph (1) indicate that the subject of the search is currently on parole or probation, the court shall order the clerk of the court to immediately notify, by the most effective means available, the appropriate parole or probation officer of any information obtained through the search that the court determines is appropriate. The parole or probation officer so notified shall take all actions necessary to revoke any parole or probation, or any other actions, with respect to the subject person, as appropriate and as soon as practicable.
- (*l*) Upon making any order for custody or visitation pursuant to this section, the court shall follow the procedures specified in subdivisions (c) and (d) of Section 6323 of the Family Code.

SECTION 1.

SEC. 2. Section 366.26 of the Welfare and Institutions Code is amended to read:

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366.26. (a) This section applies to children who are adjudged dependent children of the juvenile court pursuant to subdivision (c) of Section 360. The procedures specified herein are the exclusive procedures for conducting these hearings; Part 2 (commencing with Section 3020) of Division 8 of the Family Code is not applicable to these proceedings. Section 8714.7 of the Family Code is applicable and available to all dependent children meeting the requirements of that section, if the postadoption contact agreement has been entered into voluntarily. For children who are adjudged dependent children of the juvenile court pursuant to subdivision (c) of Section 360, this section and Sections 8604, 8605, 8606, and 8700 of the Family Code and Chapter 5 (commencing with Section 7660) of Part 3 of Division 12 of the Family Code specify the exclusive procedures for permanently terminating parental rights with regard to, or establishing legal guardianship of, the child while the child is a dependent child of the juvenile court.

- (b) At the hearing, that shall be held in juvenile court for all children who are dependents of the juvenile court, the court, in order to provide stable, permanent homes for these children, shall review the report as specified in Section 361.5, 366.21, or 366.22, shall indicate that the court has read and considered it, shall receive other evidence that the parties may present, and then shall make findings and orders in the following order of preference:
- (1) Terminate the rights of the parent or parents and order that the child be placed for adoption and, upon the filing of a petition for adoption in the juvenile court, order that a hearing be set. The court shall proceed with the adoption after the appellate rights of the natural parents have been exhausted.
- (2) On making a finding under paragraph (3) of subdivision (c), identify adoption as the permanent placement goal and order that efforts be made to locate an appropriate adoptive family for the child within a period not to exceed 180 days.
- (3) Appoint a legal guardian for the child and order that letters of guardianship issue.
- 37 (4) Order that the child be placed in long-term foster care, 38 subject to the periodic review of the juvenile court under Section 39 366.3.

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In choosing among the above alternatives the court shall proceed pursuant to subdivision (c).

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- (c) (1) If the court determines, based on the assessment provided as ordered under subdivision (i) of Section 366.21 or subdivision (b) of Section 366.22, and any other relevant evidence, by a clear and convincing standard, that it is likely the child will be adopted, the court shall terminate parental rights and order the child placed for adoption. The fact that the child is not yet placed in a preadoptive home nor with a relative or foster family who is prepared to adopt the child, shall not constitute a basis for the court to conclude that it is not likely the child will be adopted. A finding under subdivision (b) or paragraph (1) of subdivision (e) of Section 361.5 that reunification services shall not be offered, under subdivision (e) of Section 366.21 that the whereabouts of a parent have been unknown for six months or that the parent has failed to visit or contact the child for six months or that the parent has been convicted of a felony indicating parental unfitness, or, under Section 366.21 or 366.22, that the court has continued to remove the child from the custody of the parent or guardian and has terminated reunification services, shall constitute a sufficient basis for termination of parental rights unless the court finds a compelling reason for determining that termination would be detrimental to the child due to one or more of the following circumstances:
- (A) The parents or guardians have maintained regular visitation and contact with the child and the child would benefit from continuing the relationship.
- (B) A child 12 years of age or older objects to termination of parental rights.
- (C) The child is placed in a residential treatment facility, adoption is unlikely or undesirable, and continuation of parental rights will not prevent finding the child a permanent family placement if the parents cannot resume custody when residential care is no longer needed.
- (D) The child is living with a relative or foster parent who is unable or unwilling to adopt the child because of exceptional circumstances, that do not include an unwillingness to accept legal or financial responsibility for the child, but who is willing and capable of providing the child with a stable and permanent environment and the removal of the child from the physical

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custody of his or her relative or foster parent would be detrimental to the emotional well-being of the child. This subparagraph does not apply to any child who is living with a nonrelative and who is either (i) under six years of age or (ii) a member of a sibling group where at least one child is under six years of age and the siblings are, or should be, permanently placed together.

(E) There would be substantial interference with a child's sibling relationship, taking into consideration the nature and extent of the relationship, including, but not limited to, whether the child was raised with a sibling in the same home, whether the child shared significant common experiences or has existing close and strong bonds with a sibling, and whether ongoing contact is in the child's best interest, including the child's long-term emotional interest, as compared to the benefit of legal permanence through adoption.

If the court finds that termination of parental rights would be detrimental to the child pursuant to subparagraph (A), (B), (C), (D), or (E), it shall state its reasons in writing or on the record.

- (2) The court shall not terminate parental rights if at each and every hearing at which the court was required to consider reasonable efforts or services, the court has found that reasonable efforts were not made or that reasonable services were not offered or provided.
- (3) If the court finds that termination of parental rights would not be detrimental to the child pursuant to paragraph (1) and that the child has a probability for adoption but is difficult to place for adoption and there is no identified or available prospective adoptive parent, the court may identify adoption as the permanent placement goal and without terminating parental rights, order that efforts be made to locate an appropriate adoptive family for the child within a period not to exceed 180 days. During this 180-day period, the public agency responsible for seeking adoptive parents for each child shall, to the extent possible, ask each child who is 10 years of age or older who is placed in a group home for six months or longer from the date the child entered foster care, to identify any individuals, other than the child's siblings, who are important to the child, in order to identify potential adoptive parents. The public agency may ask any other child to provide that information, as appropriate.

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During the 180-day period, the public agency shall, to the extent 2 possible, contact other private and public adoption agencies regarding the availability of the child for adoption. During the 3 4 180-day period, the public agency shall conduct the search for 5 adoptive parents in the same manner as prescribed for children in 6 Sections 8708 and 8709 of the Family Code. At the expiration of 7 this period, another hearing shall be held and the court shall 8 proceed pursuant to paragraph (1) or (3) of subdivision (b). For purposes of this section, a child may only be found to be difficult 10 to place for adoption if there is no identified or available prospective adoptive parent for the child because of the child's 12 membership in a sibling group, or the presence of a diagnosed 13 medical, physical, or mental handicap, or the child is the age of 14 seven years or more.

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- (4) (A) If the court finds that adoption of the child or termination of parental rights is not in the best interest of the child, because one of the conditions in subparagraph (A), (B), (C), (D), or (E) of paragraph (1) or in paragraph (2) applies, the court shall either order that the present caretakers or other appropriate persons shall become legal guardians of the child or order that the child remain in long-term foster care. Legal guardianship shall be considered before long-term foster care, if it is in the best interests of the child and if a suitable guardian can be found. A child who is 10 years of age or older who is placed in a group home for six months or longer from the date the child entered foster care, shall be asked to identify any individuals, other than the child's siblings, who are important to the child, in order to identify potential guardians. The agency may ask any other child to provide that information, as appropriate.
- (B) If the child is living with a relative or a foster parent who is willing and capable of providing a stable and permanent environment, but not willing to become a legal guardian, the child shall not be removed from the home if the court finds the removal would be seriously detrimental to the emotional well-being of the child because the child has substantial psychological ties to the relative caretaker or foster parents.
- (C) The court shall also make an order for visitation with the parents or guardians unless the court finds by a preponderance of the evidence that the visitation would be detrimental to the physical or emotional well-being of the child.

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(5) If the court finds that the child should not be placed for adoption, that legal guardianship shall not be established, and that there are no suitable foster parents except exclusive-use homes available to provide the child with a stable and permanent environment, the court may order the care, custody, and control of the child transferred from the county welfare department to a licensed foster family agency. The court shall consider the written recommendation of the county welfare director regarding the suitability of the transfer. The transfer shall be subject to further court orders.

The licensed foster family agency shall place the child in a suitable licensed or exclusive-use home that has been certified by the agency as meeting licensing standards. The licensed foster family agency shall be responsible for supporting the child and providing appropriate services to the child, including those services ordered by the court. Responsibility for the support of the child shall not, in and of itself, create liability on the part of the foster family agency to third persons injured by the child. Those children whose care, custody, and control are transferred to a foster family agency shall not be eligible for foster care maintenance payments or child welfare services, except for emergency response services pursuant to Section 16504.

- (d) The proceeding for the appointment of a guardian for a child who is a dependent of the juvenile court shall be in the juvenile court. If the court finds pursuant to this section that legal guardianship is the appropriate permanent plan, it shall appoint the legal guardian and issue letters of guardianship. The assessment prepared pursuant to subdivision (g) of Section 361.5, subdivision (i) of Section 366.21, and subdivision (b) of Section 366.22 shall be read and considered by the court prior to the appointment, and this shall be reflected in the minutes of the court. The person preparing the assessment may be called and examined by any party to the proceeding.
- (e) The proceeding for the adoption of a child who is a dependent of the juvenile court shall be in the juvenile court if the court finds pursuant to this section that adoption is the appropriate permanent plan and the petition for adoption is filed in the juvenile court. Upon the filing of a petition for adoption, the juvenile court shall order that an adoption hearing be set. The court shall proceed with the adoption after the appellate rights of

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the natural parents have been exhausted. The full report required by Section 8715 of the Family Code shall be read and considered by the court prior to the adoption and this shall be reflected in the minutes of the court. The person preparing the report may be called and examined by any party to the proceeding. It is the intent of the Legislature, pursuant to this subdivision, to give potential adoptive parents the option of filing in the juvenile court the petition for the adoption of a child who is a dependent of the juvenile court. Nothing in this section is intended to prevent the filing of a petition for adoption in any other court as permitted by law, instead of in the juvenile court.

- (f) At the beginning of any proceeding pursuant to this section, if the child or the parents are not being represented by previously retained or appointed counsel, the court shall proceed as follows:
- (1) In accordance with subdivision (c) of Section 317, if a child before the court is without counsel, the court shall appoint counsel unless the court finds that the child would not benefit from the appointment of counsel. The court shall state on the record its reasons for that finding.
- (2) If a parent appears without counsel and is unable to afford counsel, the court shall appoint counsel for the parent, unless this representation is knowingly and intelligently waived. The same counsel shall not be appointed to represent both the child and his or her parent. The public defender or private counsel may be appointed as counsel for the parent.
- (3) Private counsel appointed under this section shall receive a reasonable sum for compensation and expenses, the amount of which shall be determined by the court. The amount shall be paid by the real parties in interest, other than the child, in any proportions the court deems just. However, if the court finds that any of the real parties in interest are unable to afford counsel, the amount shall be paid out of the general fund of the county.
- (g) The court may continue the proceeding for not to exceed 30 days as necessary to appoint counsel, and to enable counsel to become acquainted with the case.
- (h) (1) At all proceedings under this section, the court shall consider the wishes of the child and shall act in the best interests of the child.
- (2) In accordance with Section 349, the child shall be present in court if the child or the child's counsel so requests or the court

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so orders. If the child is 10 years of age or older and is not present at a hearing held pursuant to this section, the court shall determine whether the minor was properly notified of his or her right to attend the hearing and inquire as to the reason why the child is not present.

- (3) (A) The testimony of the child may be taken in chambers and outside the presence of the child's parent or parents, if the child's parent or parents are represented by counsel, the counsel is present, and any of the following circumstances exist:
- (i) The court determines that testimony in chambers is necessary to ensure truthful testimony.
- (ii) The child is likely to be intimidated by a formal courtroom setting.
- (iii) The child is afraid to testify in front of his or her parent or parents.
- (B) After testimony in chambers, the parent or parents of the child may elect to have the court reporter read back the testimony or have the testimony summarized by counsel for the parent or parents.
- (C) The testimony of a child also may be taken in chambers and outside the presence of the guardian or guardians of a child under the circumstances specified in this subdivision.
- (i) (1) Any order of the court permanently terminating parental rights under this section shall be conclusive and binding upon the child, upon the parent or parents and upon all other persons who have been served with citation by publication or otherwise as provided in this chapter. After making the order, the juvenile court shall have no power to set aside, change, or modify it, except as provided in paragraph (2), but nothing in this section shall be construed to limit the right to appeal the order.
- (2) A dependent child who has not been adopted after the passage of at least three years from the date the court terminated parental rights may petition the juvenile court to reinstate parental rights pursuant to the procedure prescribed by Section 388. The child may file the petition prior to the expiration of this three-year period if all parties stipulate that the child is no longer adoptable. If it appears that the best interests of the child may be promoted by reinstatement of parental rights, the court shall order that a hearing be held and shall give prior notice, or cause prior notice to be given, to the social worker or probation officer

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and to the child's attorney of record, or, if there is no attorney of record for the child, to the child and to his or her former parent or parents whose parental rights were terminated and the child's tribe, if applicable, by means prescribed by Section 388 unless a different manner is prescribed by the court. The juvenile court shall grant the petition if it finds by a preponderance of the evidence that the child is no longer likely to be adopted and that reinstatement of parental rights is in the child's best interest.

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- (j) If the court, by order or judgment, declares the child free from the custody and control of both parents, or one parent if the other does not have custody and control, the court shall at the same time order the child referred to the State Department of Social Services or a licensed adoption agency for adoptive placement by the agency. However, a petition for adoption may not be granted until the appellate rights of the natural parents have been exhausted. The State Department of Social Services or licensed adoption agency shall be responsible for the custody and supervision of the child and shall be entitled to the exclusive care and control of the child at all times until a petition for adoption is granted. With the consent of the agency, the court may appoint a guardian of the child, who shall serve until the child is adopted.
- (k) Notwithstanding any other provision of law, the application of any person who, as a relative caretaker or foster parent, has cared for a dependent child for whom the court has approved a permanent plan for adoption, or who has been freed for adoption, shall be given preference with respect to that child over all other applications for adoptive placement if the agency making the placement determines that the child has substantial emotional ties to the relative caretaker or foster parent and removal from the relative caretaker or foster parent would be seriously detrimental to the child's emotional well-being.

As used in this subdivision, "preference" means that the application shall be processed and, if satisfactory, the family study shall be completed before the processing of the application of any other person for the adoptive placement of the child.

- (1) (1) An order by the court that a hearing pursuant to this section be held is not appealable at any time unless all of the following applies:
- 39 (A) A petition for extraordinary writ review was filed in a 40 timely manner.

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(B) The petition substantively addressed the specific issues to be challenged and supported that challenge by an adequate record.

- (C) The petition for extraordinary writ review was summarily denied or otherwise not decided on the merits.
- (2) Failure to file a petition for extraordinary writ review within the period specified by rule, to substantively address the specific issues challenged, or to support that challenge by an adequate record shall preclude subsequent review by appeal of the findings and orders made pursuant to this section.
- (3) The Judicial Council shall adopt rules of court, effective January 1, 1995, to ensure all of the following:
- (A) A trial court, after issuance of an order directing a hearing pursuant to this section be held, shall advise all parties of the requirement of filing a petition for extraordinary writ review as set forth in this subdivision in order to preserve any right to appeal in these issues. This notice shall be made orally to a party if the party is present at the time of the making of the order or by first-class mail by the clerk of the court to the last known address of a party not present at the time of the making of the order.
- (B) The prompt transmittal of the records from the trial court to the appellate court.
- (C) That adequate time requirements for counsel and court personnel exist to implement the objective of this subdivision.
- (D) That the parent or guardian, or their trial counsel or other counsel, is charged with the responsibility of filing a petition for extraordinary writ relief pursuant to this subdivision.
- (4) The intent of this subdivision is to do both of the following:
- (A) Make every reasonable attempt to achieve a substantive and meritorious review by the appellate court within the time specified in Sections 366.21 and 366.22 for holding a hearing pursuant to this section.
- (B) Encourage the appellate court to determine all writ petitions filed pursuant to this subdivision on their merits.
- (5) This subdivision shall only apply to cases in which an order to set a hearing pursuant to this section is issued on or after January 1, 1995.
- (m) Except for subdivision (j), this section shall also apply to minors adjudged wards pursuant to Section 727.31.

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